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Media Release

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i Source: [Criminal Courts, Australia, 2020-21 financial year](#)

The number of defendants finalised in Australian criminal courts increased by 8 per cent in 2020–21, following a 16 per cent decrease the previous year, according to data released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

There were 508,748 defendants finalised in criminal courts across the country in 2020–21. The most common offences were traffic and driving offences (35%), assault and other acts intended to cause injury (14%), and illicit drug offences (11%).

ABS Director of the National Centre of Crime and Justice Statistics, William Milne, said that the increase reflected a temporary easing of COVID-19 restrictions in most states and territories from mid-2020, and additional use of online hearings. This allowed more defendants to be processed by the courts, rather than having their cases deferred.

“The increase in the number of defendants reflects a shift back towards the usual capacities of the courts.”

“While there was variation across the country, the increase was largely driven by the number of defendants in New South Wales and Queensland returning to levels similar to what we saw prior to the COVID-19 pandemic,” Mr Milne said.

Ongoing COVID-19 restrictions throughout 2020–21 significantly impacted Victoria, and this was reflected in the criminal courts data, with the state having a 13 per cent decrease in the number of defendants finalised.

Further COVID-19 impacts on criminal court operations may appear in future releases as parts of the country reimposed restrictions following the outbreaks in mid to late 2021.

Today's release follows the Recorded Crime – Offenders release, issued earlier this month on the ABS website.

Further information, including state and territory data, can be found in [Criminal Courts Australia, 2020–21 \(/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/criminal-courts-australia/2020-21\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/criminal-courts-australia/2020-21), available for free download from the ABS website: <http://www.abs.gov.au> (<https://www.abs.gov.au/>)

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